

Clifford Declines to Testify Before Fulbright Committee Despite Rusk's Promise

Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford has declined to appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in what might have been a repetition of the televised hearings with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

Rusk had announced at the Tuesday hearing that Clifford would appear next Monday. He was to testify on military assistance in the foreign aid bill. Rusk also was testifying on that bill, in theory, at least.

Clifford, like Rusk, would have been subjected to questions on future American policy in the Vietnam war. Negotiations for the Clifford appearance at a public session had been going on for several days before Rusk started the Committee with a flat statement that the Pentagon chief would appear.

But yesterday, after a Cabinet meeting at the White House, Clifford's office told the Committee that the Secretary was too busy to appear. Instead, Deputy Secretary Cedersberg (R-Mich.), who Paul H. Nitze will testify, along with Paul C. Warnke, Assistant

Secretary for International Security Affairs.

The hearing is scheduled for Monday but may be postponed because of the death of a brother of Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.).

The Committee, meanwhile, continued its hearings on foreign aid, with AID Administrator William S. Gaud running into stiff criticism that his agency had financed purchases of "everything from bubble gum to outboard motors."

Gaud replied that his agency has the machinery to recover any expenditures for ineligible items. In the House yesterday, 11 members, including two Democratic leaders, said in a speech-making session that Rusk had convinced the American people of the rightness of the U.S. position.

"Thank God for Secretary Rusk," said Democratic Whip Hale Boggs of Louisiana.

But the biggest round of applause went to Rep. Elford Cedersberg (R-Mich.), who said, "I'm against letting communism take over Southeast

Asia or any other part of the world."

Several members said they telephoned constituents after the nationally televised hearing to see how they reacted to Rusk's performance.

One, Rep. Jim Wright (D-Tex.), said he had been concerned that the hearings would undermine public morale, but that he found the opposite was true.

Instead, Wright said Rusk had "increased their confidence . . . in the position of the United States."

The President's supporters said Rusk had emerged the clear winner in the two-day confrontation.

White House Press Secretary George Christian told reporters meanwhile that Rusk had defined the President's position "in all particulars" when he told the Fulbright committee Tuesday: "If more troops are needed (in Vietnam) we will, as we have done in the past, consult with appropriate members of Congress."

But Christian stressed that

Mr. Johnson would never surrender any of his constitutional powers as head of the U.S. armed forces.

"The President is going to be commander in chief," he emphasized.

At the end of the hearings, Fulbright said that as far as he could determine, Rusk meant that the Administration would confer with Congress only after the President and his advisers had reached a decision.

Pressed to clarify whether the Administration would con-

fer before or after a decision is made, Christian would only say, "Let's stay with what Secretary Rusk said."

He added that Mr. Johnson "has a very fine record of consultation with Congress on any matters."